

Random Testing for Small Transit Systems

For rural or small transit systems with lower numbers of safety-sensitive employees, achieving unpredictability in the random testing program can be difficult. For example, a small transit system with 12 full-time safety-sensitive employees would be required to test a minimum of 4 employees per year. It is reasonable to assume that selections would likely be performed quarterly, meaning that each quarter only one employee would be selected. In this scenario, despite the transit system varying the times of day, the days of the week, and the date within the selection period for which the employee is sent for random testing, a glaring problem quickly emerges. With one test expected per quarter, employees may not know when the test will occur, but once it does, they are nearly certain that another test will not be ordered until the next quarter, eliminating the element of deterrence.

To solve the predictability of testing with very small random programs, a transit system may want to take randomization a step further, by randomizing their testing rate. This would mean that once a year, or even once per draw period,

the rate at which selections are conducted will be randomly varied. For example, the DER may choose to test at 25% for the first quarter, 50% the next quarter, and 25% for the remaining two quarters.

The result will be only one additional test, but the effect will be to let employees know that random testing may happen at an increased rate without their knowing. In terms of affordability, even testing 75 or 100% for one quarter will be easily achievable because the overall employee base is comparatively small. While 100% sounds shocking at first, for a small transit system it may mean the

addition of only 6 to 8 tests per year, which is an affordable measure for ensuring that the random program is truly unpredictable.

Since the goal of the random program is both detection and deterrence of drug use and alcohol misuse, each employee should have a reasonable expectation that they may be selected for random testing anytime they are performing safety-sensitive duties. Randomizing (or strategically altering) your random testing rate each selection period may be an effective way of drastically improving your random testing program. ●



Rural transits systems face unique challenges in maintaining a compliant random testing program. (© iStockPhoto/Jeff T. Green)